

1905. Permanent Issue.The Three Key-Plates.

Three Key-Plates were employed for the centre of the stamps of this issue, and several values are known to have been printed from more than one of them. Their best distinguishing characteristic is the depth to which they print, and this can most easily be seen by examining the faces of the children supporting the medallion portrait of the King.

Plate I.

The faces of the children are always light.

Plate II.

The faces of the children are always dark.



That these really represent two distinct plates, and not phases of printing, is now quite definitely determined. The explanation is most probably that two master-dies were prepared from the original engraved die, one slightly more deeply sunk than the other, and that a set of stereotypes was prepared from each and a plate constructed therefrom. The third Key-Plate is composite, and contains examples of each type, arranged in different vertical rows in the sheet.

Plate III.

Vertical rows 1, 3, 5, 6, 8 & 10 shew the "light" type, rows 2, 4, 7 and 9 the "dark" type of centre.



Key-Plates I and II were prepared for composite printing with different duty-plates in a single operation, this does not seem to be the case with Plate III, which is only found on the bicoloured stamps, never on stamps which were printed at one operation.